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SUBJECT: (S) ETHIOPIA EXPLORING CHANGING TFG PRESIDENT AND
PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: CDA Deborah Malac. For Reason: 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (S/NF) Summary. Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told the Charge on October 3 that Ethiopia's objective for the upcoming October 27-29 InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit in Nairobi was to constrain Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf by turning him into a ceremonial president, or Yusuf would be "jettisoned" for the greater good. Tekeda said that Ethiopia would no longer allow Yusuf to be an impediment to political progress in Somalia. Tekeda revealed that he had been meeting secretly with Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) Djibouti leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to discuss the formation of an ARS/TFG unity government which could include Sheikh Sharif as prime minister. Separately on October 2, several TFG officials told PolOff that they expected that the make-up of the TFG would be somehow altered at the Nairobi summit, and one official who knew of the Tekeda-Sharif meetings confirmed that Ethiopia had proposed the creation of a ARS/TFG unity government. All of the TFG officials expected every Somali with political aspirations, within the TFG or without, to go to Nairobi to be on the ground floor of "whatever comes next." End Summary.

Tekeda: IGAD Summit Meant "To Put Yusuf in a Cage"

12. (S/NF) Tekeda said that Ethiopia's objective for the upcoming October 27-29 IGAD Summit in Nairobi was "to soften Yusuf up...and put him in a cage." He said that "either Yusuf will come out of the summit as a ceremonial president or he will be jettisoned." Tekeda hoped that the summit would convince Yusuf that he cannot continue conducting business as usual with Yusuf only serving his Majerteen clan interests. Tekeda stated that there was now absolute consensus within the Ethiopian government that President Yusuf can no longer continue to be an obstacle to political progress in Somalia. He said that time was running out in the TFG transition period and that action must be taken now. He opined that in less than one year the transition period will be over, and "no one in Somalia will be legitimate" if the TFG has not finished its job. Tekeda said that Yusuf was "an old man with no capacity," and that he was a liability. The only question that remains is what can be done to limit the damage he can do. Tekeda said Yusuf could continue as President if he agreed to become a figure head, but if Yusuf does not listen, then he must leave. The Charge encouraged Tekeda to confer and coordinate with U.S. Embassy Nairobi to ensure that everyone was on the same page.

13. (S/NF) Tekeda declined to discuss who might replace

Yusuf as President or explain in detail how the summit would pressure Yusuf. Instead he emphasized that much work needed to be done between now and the end of October. He also said that Ethiopia's assessment was subject to change as events warranted. Tekeda went on to note that a fundamental problem in Somalia was the Habir Gedir-Abgal conflict, and that because Yusuf was hated by both factions, he was an obstacle to resolving those issues. He added that sometimes individuals needed to be sacrificed for the greater good, and that there were no "sacred cows" in Somalia. However, Tekeda emphasized that Ethiopia would not abandon Yusuf personally because Ethiopia and Yusuf had a long-standing relationship, and that Ethiopia would continue to work with him, and provide protection for him and his family.

ARS Sheikh Sharif as Prime Minister?

14. (S/NF) Tekeda revealed that in the previous weeks he had met secretly with ARS/Djibouti head Sheikh Sharif to discuss the integration of the ARS into the TFG. He said that some combination of the ARS and TFG was necessary for success in Somalia, and he suggested that it was possible that Sharif could become the next TFG Prime Minister. When queried whether Yusuf would accept him, Tekeda said that he did not know, but that Prime Minister Nur Adde would resign to facilitate ARS integration. Tekeda admitted that there were many issues to be yet worked out and many unknowns. He observed that Hawiye acceptance of the TFG was a major problem, and that Sharif's entry into the government could help gain their support. Tekeda also said that Yusuf did not

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know about Ethiopia's contact with Sharif, and he asked that this information be kept close hold. Tekeda characterized Sharif as a "calm and cool person who was young, but with potential." Tekeda said his discussions with Sharif would continue, and that he wanted Sharif to come to Addis Ababa. He asserted that Sharif wanted to come as well, but that Sharif needed to figure out how to sell this to his more hard-line supporters. Neither Sharif nor any member of ARS/Djibouti would attend the Nairobi summit, and the idea of integration would be discussed with TFG leaders sometime after the summit.

TFG Speculation on the IGAD Summit and Next Steps

15. (S/NF) On October 2, PolOff met separately with several TFG members who all believed that the TFG would emerge from the Nairobi summit somehow altered, including the possible integration of ARS members. TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah, who is in regular contact with both Yusuf and Nur Adde, informed PolOff privately about Tekeda's secret meetings with Sharif. The official said that Tekeda told Sharif that any type of "unity" government must be established under the mantle of the TFG or the international community would never accept it. Reportedly, Sharif told Tekeda that Ethiopia must withdraw from Somalia before any deal could be reached, to which Tekeda replied that Ethiopia would leave Somalia today and return to meet with Sharif tomorrow if that was the real issue. The official said that Sharif then backed down from his demand, and accepted that Ethiopia would have to withdraw in stages after an agreement between the TFG and the ARS was reached. The official said that the Ethiopian government had yet to sell the idea of a unity government to the TFG, and had not informed Yusuf of their discussions with Sharif.

16. (S/NF) Farah said that Yusuf feared going to the summit because he did not know whether he would still be president after it was over, and therefore, Yusuf was pressing his people not to attend. Nevertheless, several TFG officials said that every Somali with political aspirations would be heading to Nairobi because they wanted to be on the ground floor of whatever comes next, and none of them wanted to risk being left out. One official said that former TFG Prime

Minister Ghedi was already preparing "his team" in Nairobi looking to make a return to the government. The officials estimated that the summit, and the surrounding meetings, would last at least a month, and that there could be as many as 1,000 Somali participants.

17. (S/NF) TFG parliament member, and former foreign minister, Ismail Hurre Bubba said that the anti-Yusuf mood in the parliament was growing, and that anything could happen in Nairobi, including the impeachment of Yusuf. The official explained that the parliament was unhappy with Yusuf because they think he "sold them out" by signing the August 26 Addis Ababa Agreement. He said Yusuf went to Addis Ababa in August to have PM Nur Adde removed, but instead signed an agreement keeping Nur Adde in office without consulting with his, Yusuf's, supporters in the parliament. He also said that there was now some discussion of creating the position of vice-president which would coincide with the empowerment of the three deputy prime ministers as a way to contain President Yusuf. The officials stated that the parliament's refusal to accept the ten cabinet members, who ostensibly resigned in August, back into the cabinet was a manifestation of the parliament's unhappiness with Yusuf.

Comment

18. (S/NF) Given that at least one TFG official, who is in regular communication with President Yusuf, knows about the Tekeda-Sharif meeting, and Yusuf's apparent uneasiness about the upcoming summit, it is difficult to believe that Yusuf does not already know about those discussions. Still, in light of reports from the Ethiopian Foreign Minister's Chief of Staff more than one month ago that Yusuf himself had sent emissaries to Sharif, and offered him the prime ministership, such a move may well be possible. Certainly, it will be difficult for the Ethiopians to keep this quiet for the next three weeks leading up to the Nairobi summit. In all of Post's discussions with the Ethiopian government on Somalia, Tekeda's comments regarding the possible replacement of

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President Yusuf were the most forceful observed, and we assess that the Ethiopians are not bluffing. They appear to have concluded that they have run out of time, and that drastic action is needed if there is to be any political solution in Somalia that will allow them to withdraw their military forces. Post will continue to engage with the Ethiopian government to keep Washington informed, and would welcome guidance from Washington on how to proceed with the Ethiopians on this critical issue. End Comment.

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